

Submitted by
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House Committee on Commerce Testimony

Thank you Chairman Schmidt and all Committee members for your time and continued hard work on behalf of the state of Michigan.

As we assemble today to talk about the future of Michigan's Film incentive and its benefits for Michiganders, I'd like to give you an example of what it means to me and my family. My wife and I were both raised and educated in Michigan, and would like to be able to continue living and raising our children here in the state we love.

My wife grew up in Dearborn; graduated from Fordson and went to Wayne State University. I grew up on the west side in Kalamazoo, and I graduated from the theatre program at Western Michigan University.

In order for me to earn a living in my field, I moved to Los Angeles in the heart of the film industry where I worked for 15 years. I have done stunts for some 20 years and have been in many high performing movies, including doubling Will Ferrell in *Blades of Glory*, *Set Brothers* and *Semi-Pro*, for which I was nominated for a Taurus World Stunt Award, the stunt communities Oscars.

When the first film incentive was passed over 3 years ago, I jumped at the opportunity to come back home. Since being back in Michigan I have worked on over 40 productions as a stunt coordinator and a stuntman. Some of those movies were *Real Steal*, *Ides of March*, *Machine Gun Preacher*, *Street Kings 2: Motor City*, and currently *Oz: The Great and Powerful* at Raleigh Studios.

Things were going very well for me (and other Michiganders) here in Michigan until February of this year when the Governor announced his budget, which in essence killed the film incentive. This drastically changed my ability to earn a living here. For example, In 2010 I worked from the end of March to late December with only six days off. I worked on some 14 productions, and hired over 50 stunt people for various gags in those films. In 2011, I worked on 4 productions, and hired only 6 stunt people.

In the last 3 years, my company has spent over \$100,000 here in Michigan, and with my business partner we have spent over \$250,000. In 2011, I have spent less than \$5,000. The uncertainty of the incentive has really made it difficult to make any more investments.

My income has dropped 75% since the Governor's announcement in February. If it wasn't for *Oz* I would be in Virginia, Louisiana or back in Los Angeles working. It gave me such pleasure last year to turn down work in LA to stay home with my wife and children. My wife and I have made the decision to stay in Michigan, but many others in the industry will not be able to do so.

I know that the former incentive was very generous, but it needed to be to get producers' attention. It did. They came to Michigan and loved it. I can't tell you how

many times directors, producers, and out of state crews commented on how "awesome" Michigan is.

With SB 569 I believe that we have tightened up the incentive and made it better for our Michigan residents. It will keep our local crews working and help diversify Michigan's economic situation.

I have worked with many people who have re-educated themselves from manufacturing cars to manufacturing films. The film industry was changing the world's impression of Detroit and of Michigan. We were no longer just car people or a crime capital, but a state where "movie stars" wanted to be. It also was changing the way Michiganders were looking at themselves.

I have worked all over the state from Metro Detroit, to Grand Rapids, and up to Traverse City. Everywhere I worked people would embrace the film productions. I remember one night down in the Eastern Market in Detroit, we were shooting Street Kings 2. We just crashed a car and were moving into one of the rundown buildings to shoot the films finale. All of a sudden I heard a car coming down the street (the muffler was in desperate need of repair). The car looked as if it too needed a major face lift, and in a closer look, it could have been the driver's home. He stopped right next to me; leaned out his window and said, "You guys shooting a movie?" I said "yes we are". Then with a giant smile he just said, "Thank You!", then waved and went on his way. I only wish I could have thanked him for opening my eyes.

So to you, this committee, I would like to say "Thank You" for being forward thinkers and for helping the state I love be a great place to work and to live.